

# HELL

## ETERNAL PUNISHMENT OR ANNIHILATION?

by Avram Yehoshua

[The Seed of Abraham](#)

The idea of Hell being a place of annihilation, or Purgatory for repentance for the wicked, has little foundation in Scripture. They are a humanistic concept and a pagan teaching, respectively, conceived by those who can't conceive that the God of Israel would punish anyone forever, or pagans who didn't know the one true God, which is where Catholicism got its idea for Purgatory from.<sup>1</sup>

It's clear from Scripture that Hell is the eternal punishment for the wicked (e.g. Mt. 25:46), but what is Hell? Hell-Fire is nothing less than the full manifestation of the God of Israel; the God whose divine characteristic is akin to what we know of as fire.<sup>2</sup> That's why Peter (2nd Pet. 3:10, 12) and others (Psalm 97:5; Micah 1:4; Nahum 1:5) speak of this Earth and Heaven *melting at His (fully manifested) Presence*. Where in the universe, so to speak, can God place those who reject and despise Him, that He won't be there *in all His fiery Glory*? It's this eternal Fire that everyone will be immersed in, both the righteous and the wicked, but only those who have been transformed into the very Image and nature of His Son, Messiah Yeshua, will be able to live in that Fire for eternity. Those who aren't found 'in Messiah' (1st Thess. 1:10; 2:19) will suffer eternally in God's fully manifested presence (i.e. Hell—the Lake of Fire).<sup>3</sup>

For the wicked, suffering and punishment will be for eternity, as the Lord Yeshua teaches in his story about the sheep and the goats (Mt. 25:32-46; see also Mk. 3:29). At the end of the story Yeshua says of the goats and His sheep,

“And these will go away into *eternal punishment*, but the righteous into *eternal life*.”  
(Matthew 25:46)<sup>4</sup>

Eternal life is parallel to eternal punishment, which speaks of being punished eternally as the other is rewarded eternally. Some translations have “everlasting,” but the Greek word is the same for both and means eternal or everlasting.

There are some who espouse that God will vaporize or annihilate the wicked after a certain amount of

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, 2nd American ed. (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1959), p. 167ff.; *Purgatory and Prayers for the Dead*. In *The Two Babylons—The Full Hislop*, Avram Yehoshua's PDF of the book, it's p. 131ff. Hislop overwhelmingly proves that the Roman Catholic Church is the Babylon of the New Testament (Rev. 14:8; 17:5; cf. 18:4). Read the Christian classic, [The Two Babylons—The Full Hislop](#), for free. Any further page cites come my PDF of Hislop in this note. See also, [Is Purgatory a Biblical Concept?](#) by Michael Ross.

<sup>2</sup> See the Fire of the Burning Bush (Ex. 3:1f.); God descending as Fire upon Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:18); and God being spoken of as a consuming Fire (Ex. 24:17; Dt. 4:24; 9:3; Heb. 12:29).

<sup>3</sup> Hell and the Lake of Fire are synonymous terms, and not to be confused with Sheol (OT) and its NT counterpart Hades, which are conceptually identical and speak of something like a dark 'holding tank' for the dead, until Judgment Day (Rev. 20:13). After Messiah resurrected he went into Sheol and brought out the righteous, who, like the thief on the cross who asked to be remembered by Yeshua when he came into his Kingdom (Mt. 21:38, 44; Luke 23:39-43), are in Paradise now, awaiting Judgement Day (Rev. 20:11-15). This is based on the Scripture that speaks of Yeshua leading 'captivity captive' (Psalm 68:18; Ephesians 4:8) and what the Apostle Peter says (1st Pet. 3:18-20; 4:4-6).

<sup>4</sup> The same Greek adjective, αἰώνιον (*ae'o'ni'ohn*) *eternal*, is used in both places.

time in the Lake of Fire, but Scripture doesn't support that, despite their use of Scripture.<sup>5</sup> Robert Mounce, speaking of the wicked being punished forever, says that their,

“destiny is eternal punishment, where that of the upright is eternal life. Although *aionios* (eternal) is primarily a qualitative word, its temporal aspect should not be overlooked. Verse 46 offers little support for those who would like to think of eternal life as endless and eternal punishment as restricted in some way. That the adjective modifies both nouns in the same context indicates that we understand it in the same way.”<sup>6</sup>

R. T. France agrees and says,

“whereas ‘fire’ and ‘punishment’ might carry within them the idea of annihilation, *life* by its very nature excludes the possibility of termination. If ‘everlasting’” (in some English translations) “is an ‘unfortunate mistranslation’ in relation to the fate of the wicked, it is clearly an essential part of what *eternal life* must convey.”<sup>7</sup>

*The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* sums it up by saying,

“Eternal punishment and eternal life both employ the same adjective (*aionios*). Any attempt to reduce the punishment by restricting *eternal* reduces the bliss of the righteous by the same amount. While *eternal* may imply a qualitative as well as a quantitative concept, *the aspect of unending duration cannot be dissociated from the word*. It was the regular word for the concept of ‘eternal’ as lexicons attest. Eternal punishment is mentioned in such passages as Mt. 18:8; II Thess. 1:9; Jude 1:7, 12-13; etc.”<sup>8</sup> (cf. Dan. 12:2; Heb. 6:2; Jude 1:7)

Lukyn Williams, commenting on Mt. 25:46, says,

“taking the literal sense of our Lord’s words, and the meaning which his hearers would attach to them, we must believe that the risen life and the second death are equally everlasting.”<sup>9</sup> “If it is thought that eternity of punishment is incompatible with love and benevolence, and inequitable as the penalty of offences committed in time, it must be remembered that eternity of reward is infinitely beyond all human claims, and bears no pro-

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<sup>5</sup> Edward Fudge presents his alternate view on Hell being a place of eventual annihilation for the wicked, at an hour lecture in this [YouTube](#) video. Note that he does not cover these two very relevant Scriptures that are important to the understanding that Hell is a place of eternal punishment (Mt. 25:46; 2nd Thess. 1:9). Also, his ‘foundation’ of using Old Testament Scripture to establish and support his position is fraught with misunderstanding. For instance, he speaks of the judgment upon Sodom being death and that was their punishment, and he parallels that with Hell, but all those who died were still conscious and alive in Sheol (e.g. 1st Sam. 28:15), *awaiting final judgment*, which the Greek New Testament speaks of as Hades, a place for the dead, known as the underworld, where the dead live. Sheol is where Messiah Yeshua went to both preach and ‘take captive’ those who were held there, upon His resurrection (Ps. 68:18; Eph. 4:8; 1st Peter 3:19; 4:6; ‘For this reason the Gospel was preached *also* to those who are *dead*, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit’). Therefore, even though the wicked in Sodom *died*, they were still *alive*, and will be judged on Judgement Day and sent to the Lake of Fire where they will live forever in torment of varying degrees because God’s justice, as well as His punishment, is perfect.

<sup>6</sup> Robert H. Mounce, author; W. Ward Gasque, New Testament editor, *New International Biblical Commentary: Matthew* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), pp. 236-237.

<sup>7</sup> R. T. France, M.A., B.D., Ph.D., author; The Rev. Leon Morris, M.Sc., M.Th., Ph.D., general editor, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Matthew* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), p. 358.

<sup>8</sup> Charles F. Pfeiffer, Old Testament; Everett F. Harrison, *New Testament, The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), p. 976.

<sup>9</sup> A. Lukyn Williams and W. J. Deane, authors; Henry D. M. Spence-Jones and Joseph S. Excell, Editors; *The Pulpit Commentary Series: Matthew* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1890; Accordance Bible Software, 2017), paragraph 12,735.

portion to the merits of the recipient.”<sup>10</sup>

Carson says,

“The final separation of “sheep” and “goats” is a recurring theme in the New Testament, including Matthew (e.g., 7:21-23; 13:40-43). Some have argued that this doctrine has turned many people into infidels; but so have other Christian doctrines. The question is not how men respond to a doctrine but what Jesus and the NT writers actually teach about it.”<sup>11</sup>

Richard Lenski says,

“Here we have a plain commentary on “the fire, the eternal” of v. 41, namely “punishment eternal...Here αἰώνιος plainly refers to both punishment and life, so that it is impossible to give the word two different meanings...This settles the question: hell is as eternal as is heaven...So brief the words, so tremendous the realities.”<sup>12</sup>

A second scriptural witness that supports the understanding that Yeshua spoke of eternal punishment in Mt. 25:46 is 2nd Thessalonians 1:9. It states that the suffering of the wicked will be for eternity, and adds an insight that this suffering will be from the very presence of the Lord’s *glory*, that is to say, His fiery glory:

‘These shall be punished with everlasting destruction *from the presence of the Lord* and from the glory of His power.’ (2nd Thess. 1:9 NKJV)

The concept is Hebraic, meaning that Paul is stating the same thing a second time, but with different words. The “presence of the Lord,” and “the glory of His power” are saying the same thing: His presence and His glory are wrought with Fire.

James Moffatt, in commenting on 2nd Thess. 1:19, states that,

“*the overwhelming manifestation of the divine glory* sweeps from before it...into endless ruin the disobedient (Ps. 76:7) men who...shall pay the penalty of (see Prov. 27:12 LXX) *eternal destruction.*”<sup>13</sup>

Leon Morris writes,

“Destruction means *not* ‘annihilation,’ but complete ruin. It is the loss of all that makes life worth living. Coupled with everlasting (better ‘eternal’ as RSV), it is the *opposite* of eternal life...*The majesty of his power* points to another aspect of the same thing, for majesty (better ‘glory,’ *doxa*) means something like ‘the visible manifestation of the greatness of God.’ The Thessalonians were feeling the power of human oppressors, but Paul reminds them that there is One mightier (cf. Is. 2:10, 19, 21).”<sup>14</sup>

*The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* also states that the punishment for the wicked is not annihilation, but everlasting destruction:

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> D. A. Carson, Author; Frank E. Gaebelin, General Editor; J. D. Douglas, associate ed., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary—Matthew*, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Zondervan, 1984; Accordance Bible Software, 2017), paragraph 46,577.

<sup>12</sup> R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel, Lenski’s Commentary on the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961; Accordance Bible Software), p. 1,000.

<sup>13</sup> James Moffatt, D.D., Author; W. Robertson Nicoll, Editor, M. A., LL. D., *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, vol. four: *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), p. 46.

<sup>14</sup> Leon Morris, The Rev. Canon, M.Sc., M.Th., Ph.D., Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: *The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), p. 121.

“Annihilation is not the thought, but rather *total ruin*, the loss of everything worthwhile. Specifically, it is separation *from the presence (face) of the Lord*, the true source of all good things. New Testament descriptions of the *pangs* of hell are numerous: ‘furnace of fire’ (Mt. 13:42); lake of fire and brimstone’ (Rev. 20:10); ‘outer darkness’ (Mt. 25:30), etc., but none is more graphic than this picture of endless, utter exclusion from him who is life, light and love.”<sup>15</sup>

Daniel 7:9-10 states:

“I watched until thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated. His garment was white as snow and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His Throne was a *fiery Flame. Its wheels a burning Fire. A Fiery Stream issued and came forth* from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The Court was seated and the Books were opened.” (Daniel 7:9-10; cf. Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. 19:24; the Burning Bush, Ex. 3:2-3; God coming down on Mt. Sinai, Ex. 19:16f.; and the Holy Spirit as fire upon the heads of the Apostles; Acts 2:3)

C. F. Keil, in commenting on Daniel 7:9-10, says that,

“*fire and the shining of fire are the constant phenomena of the manifestation of God* in the world, as the earthly elements most fitting for the representation of the burning zeal with which the holy God not only punishes and destroys sinners, but also purifies and renders glorious His own people...The fire-scattering wheels of the throne show the omnipresence of the divine throne of judgment, the going of the judgment of God over the whole earth (Kliefoth). The fire which engirds with flame the throne of God pours itself forth as a stream from God into the world, consuming all that is sinful and hostile to God in the world, and rendering the people and kingdom of God glorious.”<sup>16</sup>

The Apostle Peter writes that this universe will melt away at the appearing or full manifestation of the Lord at the end of time:

“But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which *the Heavens will pass away* with a great noise, and the elements will *melt* with intense *heat*, both the Earth and the works that are in it will be *burned up*. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the Day of God, because of which the Heavens will be *dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?*” (2nd Peter 3:10-12; Scripture says God is a consuming Fire—Dt. 4:24; 5:4-5, 23-26; Heb. 12:29)

Keil also speaks of the Lake of Fire (Rev. 19:20; 20:10) with its ‘everlasting torment’ and says that von Lengerke is right in saying that the ‘passage speaks of the fiery torment of the wicked after death.’<sup>17</sup>

“Then the Beast was captured and with him, the False Prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the Mark of the Beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the Lake of Fire *burning with brimstone*...The Devil, who deceived them, was cast into the Lake of Fire and brimstone where the Beast and the False Prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” (Revelation 19:20; 20:10)

Revelation again speaks of those who will suffer forever:

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<sup>15</sup> Pfeiffer and Harrison, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 1362-1363.

<sup>16</sup> C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 9 *Ezekiel–Daniel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), p. 643.

<sup>17</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Ezekiel–Daniel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), p. 644.

“Then another angel, a third, followed them, crying with a loud voice, “Those who worship the Beast and its image, and receive a mark on their foreheads or on their hands, they will also drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of His anger, and they will be *tormented with fire and sulfur* in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the *smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. There is no rest, day or night, for those who worship the Beast and its image and for anyone who receives the mark of its name.*” (Rev 14:9-11 NRSV)

One could argue that the last sentence (‘no rest, day or night’), speaks of the wicked on Earth, but the previous two verses negate that. As for the smoke being eternal, but not their punishment, that doesn’t make any sense. Yes, of course, literally the smoke of their punishment could be read into it as only that which is eternal, but the phrase says that ‘the *smoke of their torment* goes up forever.’

The cites, listed in this footnote,<sup>18</sup> clearly point to the manifestation of Father Yahveh as the reality or basis for *Hell* (i.e. the Lake of Fire), and its *eternal* punishment for the wicked. Some use the term, ‘the Second Death,’ that is mentioned four times in Revelation (Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8) to support their position of annihilation of the wicked, but if the ‘first death’ didn’t mean non-existent or annihilation, it’s reasonable to think that the Second Death will be similar.

Also, why would God need to cast the wicked into Hell if he was going to annihilate them? Why wouldn’t He just annihilate them on Judgement Day and be done with them (Rev. 20:11-15)? Furthermore, if annihilation was the punishment of the wicked, how long do they stay in Hell before they’re obliterated? Are they there for only two seconds, or two minutes, or two days, or two months, or two years, etc.? The only mention of ‘duration’ in Hell is *eternal*.

If the wicked are annihilated, what are they doing being seen outside the eternal New Jerusalem?

“Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the Tree of Life, and may enter through the gates into the *city*, but *outside* are dogs (cult homosexual prostitutes), sorcerers, fornicators (cult prostitutes), murderers, idolaters and whoever loves and practices a lie.” (Revelation 22:14-15)

“These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the *blackness of darkness forever.*” (2nd Peter 2:17 NKJV)

In the Old Testament death is viewed as the end of physical life, but not the termination of existence. The dead, though separated from this life, continued to exist. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* states that although bringing Samuel back from the dead (1st Samuel 28:3-25) has little to do with the concept of the resurrection, at the very least it confirms that death was not annihilation and that individuals continued to exist after death.<sup>19</sup>

“And the *smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever*, and they have no rest, day or night, who worship the Beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” (Revelation 14:11 NKJV)

## PURGATORY

It wasn’t until Origen (185-254 AD) that the idea of a ‘remedial hell’ (i.e. Purgatory, a pagan concept that Origen must have learned from all the pagans around him) came into the Church as ‘a final stage of recla-

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<sup>18</sup> Ex. 3:1-6; 19:16-20; 24:17; Dt. 4:24; 9:3; Mt. 13:36-43, 49-50, esp. vv. 40-42); Mk. 3:28-29; 9:43-48; Lk. 16:23, 25, 28; 20:38; 2nd Thess. 1:8-10; Heb. 6:4-8; 12:29; Jude 1:1, 7, 12-13; Rev. 14:9-11; 19:1-3; 20:10-15; 21:8, 14-15.

<sup>19</sup> Phillip Eichman, [\*What Does the Bible Teach About the Resurrection?\*](#)

mation *even for demons*!<sup>20</sup> Most Christians of his time rejected his thoughts on this, but in the 18th century,

“neology<sup>21</sup> revived the universalistic thinking of Origen by virtually equating hell with purgatory.<sup>22</sup> *Impenitent* and *unbelieving* sinners would be subjected to a process of education and purification, but this would not be eternal and would have final redemption as its goal.”<sup>23</sup>

Liberal Protestantism, which is nothing more than humanism dressed up in Christian clothes,<sup>24</sup> in the 19th and early 20th centuries, taught:

“while not wishing to minimize the importance or solemnity of personal decision, fairly consistently rejected the idea of eternal retribution...Annihilationism also enjoyed a limited revival in some orthodox circles that wished to maintain the idea of a definitive penalty, but had difficulty with the concept of unending punishment; they thus equated hell with the extinction of being. Roman Catholicism and orthodox Protestantism, however, have generally continued to resist both the annihilationists with their dubious exegesis, and the universalists with their dogmatic presupposition that God’s love demands an ultimate restoration for all.”<sup>25</sup>

The Scriptures are clear: death doesn’t mean annihilation and the punishment for the wicked will be the Second Death in the Lake of Fire—God’s very Presence without the divine blood covering and transformation of His people into the very Image of His Son (Rom. 8:29; 1st Cor. 15:49).

“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the Earth shall awake—some to everlasting life, and some to shame and *everlasting* contempt.” (Daniel 12:2)

“and...those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” (John 5:29)

“as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sacrificial-sexual idolatry<sup>26</sup> and gone after strange flesh (a euphemism for homosexuality), are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of *eternal Fire*.” (Jude 1:7)<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Geoffrey W. Bromiley, general editor; Everett F. Harrison, Roland K. Harrison and William Sanford LaSor, associate editors, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. two (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 677.

<sup>21</sup> “Neology (‘study of new [things]’),” is “the name given to the rationalist theology of Germany or the rationalisation of the Christian religion.”

<sup>22</sup> Purgatory, as a place of ‘transition’ for sinners, where they are punished for their sins and eventually go on to eternal bliss, is not found in Scripture. It is a pagan concept that the Roman Catholic Church has taught since around the time of Origen. See Hislop, [The Two Babylons—The Full Hislop](#), section *Doctrine and Discipline*, chapter *Purgatory and Prayers for the Dead* for more on why the concept of Purgatory came from paganism.

<sup>23</sup> Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. two, p. 679.

<sup>24</sup> “Humanism is an outlook or system of thought attaching prime importance to human, rather than divine or supernatural matters. Humanist beliefs stress the potential value and goodness of human beings...and seek solely rational ways of solving human problems.”

<sup>25</sup> Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. two, p. 679.

<sup>26</sup> The English phrase, sexual immorality, or the term, fornication, in Scripture, most always refers to sacrificial, sexual idolatry. See [The Lifting of the Veil—Acts 15:20-21](#).

<sup>27</sup> Revised on Monday, June 24, 2024.